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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies continued to focus their coverage January 11 on the probe into the alleged violation of securities transaction regulations of the Rebar Asia Pacific Group, and on President Chen Shui-bian's trip to Nicaragua. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's largest-circulation daily, ran a news story on page five that said "[AIT Chairman] Raymond Burghardt Hopes to Visit Taiwan after the Lunar New Year."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, columnist Antonio Chiang criticized President Chen Shui-bian in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily," saying the mutual trust between Taiwan and the United States has been eroded and exhausted with Chen's constant transits in the United States. A separate "Apple Daily" commentary by a DPP legislator also criticized President Chen's "stopover diplomacy." The article noted that Taiwan was dealt a heavy blow when Washington mentioned the "One China" policy as it approved Chen's transit requests. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News," on the other hand, discussed the United States and Japan's plan to coordinate their security cooperation arrangements in the region. The article said Taiwan should not be complacent about possible military assistance from the United States and Japan but should move to bolster its own self-defense capabilities. End summary.

A) "A-Bian Knocks down Taiwan-U.S. Relations"

Columnist Antonio Chiang noted in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] (1/11):

"... To be able to transit the United States again worked as effectively as psychological therapy for A-Bian, who is now stuck in a rut. His appreciation and gratitude for the United States were not simply diplomatic rhetoric. But regardless of how A-Bian tries proactively to mend the ties between Taiwan and the United States, it is already too late. Washington emphasized in particular this time that A-Bian's transit was a decision made under the "One China" policy. The fact that Washington announced publicly that U.S.-Taiwan relations are subsidiary to the "One China" framework - a move that further belittles Taiwan's stance - was not a friendly act toward Taiwan. But to everyone's surprise, A-Bian was quite pleased with his first transit through San Francisco.

"A-Bian has stopped over in the United States seven times since he came to power less than seven years ago. He has been keen and calculating, hoping wholeheartedly to strengthen Taiwan's relations with the United States, but stopover diplomacy has turned out to be A-Bian's [domestic] political leverage in the end. The foundation of mutual trust between Taiwan and the United States became eroded and exhausted with A-Bian's constant transits [in the United States]. Now, each of [Bian's] transit requests has to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, with both sides haggling over all the details like people buying vegetables in a market; no details are left out, and in the end, the request has to await a final decision

by the White House.

"Almost all relevant people in Washington have a negative evaluation of A-Bian. Given that most officials in the Bush administration who sympathize with Taiwan have left office; that China has put in a lot of effort [in lobbying] [U.S.] think tanks; and that media show little interest in Taiwan, it is getting more and more difficult to find someone who will speak in favor of Taiwan. Six years ago, when U.S. President George W. Bush had just assumed his post, the Taiwan-U.S. relationship and the China-U.S. relationship were two parallel lines. But now the Taiwan-U.S. relationship has become part of the China-U.S. relationship. A-Bian has knocked down Taiwan's relationship with the United States, and whoever is elected president in the future will inherit the diplomatic debts he leaves behind."

B) "Stopover Diplomacy Makes One Too Sad to Cry"

DPP Legislator Lin Cho-shui commented in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] (1/11):

"... Even though Washington has allowed President Chen to set foot in the continental United States, he is bound by strict restrictions: no public activities, no stepping out of the hotel, and U.S. Congresspeople who want to call on him can only use the back doors of the hotel. [The treatment] remains humiliating. Compared to his previous visit to Guam, where he could go out freely, give speeches, and meet with journalists and [U.S.] officials in public, the treatment this time was poles apart. Given such poor treatment, how could the President feel so happy, and how could he smile so brightly? Was it because he wanted the Taiwan people to see his smiles via the tapes transmitted by the media?

"This was actually not the saddest part. When Washington approved Chen's transit request, it emphasized particularly that this downgraded treatment was an 'arrangement made consistent with [the

United States'] longstanding practice and in accordance with its one-China policy.' The news came as a heavy blow and a big shock to those who have paid special attention to Taiwan-U.S. relations. Even though the United States has a longstanding 'one China policy' and the Taiwan Relations Act, it has always seen to that it did not mention the one China policy when it dealt with Taiwan; the one China policy was only used as a means to comfort the Chinese leaders when talking to them face to face. It was a real surprise that [Washington] put the one China hat on the President when it dealt with Taiwan directly this time. It really made one too sad to cry to see that the President, who tries very hard to achieve 'diplomatic breakthroughs,' felt so joyful when he was made to wear the one-China hat by the United States."

C) "No Cause for complacency"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (1/11):

"The international media recently reported that the United States and Japan were considering jointly drafting plans to coordinate the responses of their respective armed forces if the People's Republic of China invades Taiwan or if the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) attacks Japan. The plan, which is scheduled to be completed in the fall, will bring the security cooperation arrangements between Washington and Tokyo to a higher level. ... This new effort to bolster the U.S.-Japan security cooperation with specific reference to Taiwan as well as Japan itself reflects Abe's effort to engage in 'positive sum diplomacy' and to promote a more proactive role for Japan in ensuring East Asian security.

"This development is welcome news for Taiwan as it shows that both Washington and Tokyo take the possibility of a PRC invasion of Taiwan seriously, that both the United States and Japan would basically side with Taiwan against the PRC and that concrete contingency plans are already underway. Thus, a swift response to such an attack could be anticipated. However, it is essential to stress that the fact that the U.S. and Japanese defense forces are engaging in active contingency plans does not justify Taiwan's citizens or political parties to adopt a complacent attitude and operate under any illusion that the U.S. or Japan will definitely

'rescue' Taiwan in case of a PRC invasion, or that Taiwan does not need to bolster its own self-defense capabilities. ...

"The damage inflicted on our national security by the delay, especially in the purchase of 12 P-3C Orion submarine hunting aircraft and up to eight diesel-electric submarines, is likely to be considerable as it will make it even more difficult for Taiwan to get on the strategic map of the U.S.-Japan security arrangements. ... Besides undermining confidence in Washington and U.S. citizens that Taiwan is willing to take responsibility for its own defense, the delays in deployment of anti-submarine weapon systems by Taiwan will weaken our capability and legitimacy in participating in joint measures with the U.S. and Japan to monitor and control PRC submarine activity in the region, a top priority for Tokyo. ..."

YOUNG